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**FROM THE SEA IN 1950: LESSONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY FROM
OPERATION CHROMITE**

by

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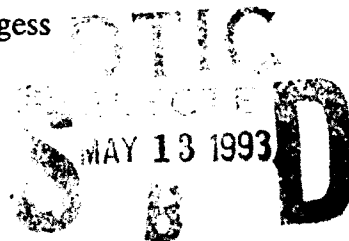
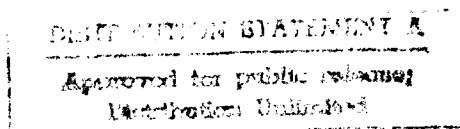
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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Operation Chromite capitalized on synchronized amphibious maneuver and interdiction to attack North Korean centers of gravity. The success of the operation highlighted the importance of understanding the operational art, pursuing specialized amphibious training, and maintaining the capability of generating superior firepower. The weaknesses our Naval Service will bring into the 21st Century for a littoral Navy are insufficient naval gunfire, mine countermeasures, and amphibious lift resources.

ABSTRACT of **FROM THE SEA IN 1950: LESSONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY FROM** **OPERATION CHROMITE**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ABSTRACT	ii
I INTRODUCTION	1
II COMPARATIVE STRATEGIC TRANSITIONS.....	3
Pre-1950	3
Post-1990	5
III FROM THE SEA IN 1950	7
Pusan Perimeter	8
Inchon to Seoul	11
Task Organization	12
Planning	13
Joint Power Projection	14
From the Sea	15
Phasing and Sustainment	16
Political and Operational Objectives in Conflict	18
IV STEAMING BACK TO THE FUTURE	20
Specialized Training	20
Superior Firepower/Power Projection	21
Amphibious Lift	22
Confluence of Doctrine and Purple Haze	23
V CONCLUSIONS	24
NOTES	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29

FROM THE SEA: LESSONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY FROM OPERATION CHROMITE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*"Military action must have political purpose."
--Joint Pub 0-1¹*

With an interpretation of *strategic culture* being the way a nation politically and socially integrates its elements of power to secure national objectives, peacefully or by war, America is arguably at a milestone in its strategic culture. The foundation of our strategic culture is rooted within the *National Will*. "National will is the ultimate strength and limitation underpinning military action or inaction. National will is the collective acceptance or rejection, by the people of the nation, of the objectives of a national policy and the corresponding sacrifices to carry it through."² If one subscribes to or accepts Clausewitz's assertion that "war is a continuation of politics by other means," it is incumbent upon military leadership at all command levels to be familiar with the broad U.S. national policy issues that may require the use of military force. It is in the political arena where the policy and requirements for warfighting are articulated, debated, and funded. The arbitration yields a capability to mold an effective national military strategy, with attendant service doctrine, which supports the national security strategy.

American post-war heritage and strategic culture following participation in major conflicts or wars has been consistent. Attention turns inward to focus on domestic

imperatives, which actual or perceived, were secondary priorities when significant national resources were galvanized and committed to the international environment. Post-conflict demobilization of military forces, particularly throughout the twentieth century, has been inevitable and concurrent with major shifts in domestic and foreign policy initiatives.

The inter-war period between World War II and the Korean War offers several unique comparisons and parallels to the direction American military forces may be headed during the remainder of this decade in preparation for an uncertain twenty-first century. As the Navy and Marine Corps embark upon a pursuit of a new direction for the Naval Service via the combined vision of *From the Sea*, lessons learned for waging littoral warfare within a transitory international environment can be gleaned by reviewing the joint/combined operations of *OPERATION CHROMITE: The Inchon - Seoul Campaign of 1950*. There are additional issues to review besides the most obvious one of how to effectively put Marines across a beachhead with superior combat power and support.

The military services during the late 1940s were desperately seeking to establish a productive and supportive equilibrium within the nation's foreign policy framework during the emerging nuclear age. Forty-five years later the Department of Defense, experiencing a mid-life crisis, finds itself at another milestone as it prepares for an uncertain future in a rapidly changing international environment. The intent of this analysis is to:

- present the comparative strategic transitions facing the United States.
- review the techniques and principles of the operational art employed during the highly successful Operation Chromite.
- articulate the current strengths and weaknesses of the Navy/Marine Corps team in their pursuit of 21st Century Naval Expeditionary Policy.

CHAPTER II

COMPARATIVE STRATEGIC TRANSITIONS

"I also predict that large-scale amphibious operations...will never occur again"
Omar N. Bradley, CJCS - October 19, 1949

PRE - 1950

Emerging from World War II the preponderance of energies concerning U.S. foreign policy and military strategy focused on superpower responsibilities in a developing bipolar world. The seeds of nuclear deterrence policy germinated in the shadow of an impending arms race with the Soviet Union. Some strategists believed the continued development of nuclear weapons would render conventional weapons obsolete.

The United States was keenly interested in rebuilding its own war-free society and economy as well as assisting Japan and the European continent via the Marshall Plan. Radical demilitarization was inevitable and required. United States uniformed personnel plummeted from a wartime high of more than 12 million to a low of 1.5 million in 1947 after suspension of the draft.¹ The demobilization was neither smartly executed or tied to an organized national strategy or capability. Attempting to grapple with the issues surrounding the roles, missions, and functions of the remaining forces, the National Military Establishment, as we predominately recognize it today, was created by the National Security Act of 1947. The Air Force achieved autonomy and with the Army and Navy were placed under the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense.

It was the events of the Berlin crisis and blockade during the summer of 1948 that offered sobering portent of Cold War realities. The ensuing policy of *containment*, first proffered by George F. Kennen via his "X" Article,² funneled United States strategies toward a bipolar global conflict with a European scenario and the possible use of nuclear weapons as a centerpiece confrontation. The thought of a peripherally small regional conflict as a subset of global Cold War, while plausible, was considered a low probability during the late 1940s. Despite forward basing of occupational forces in the Pacific rim, the focus was on the European continent and nuclear arms development.

The National Security Act of 1947 intended to create joint-service harmony and ensure efficient operational force employment with the establishment of Unified/Specified Commands. However, bitter inter-service rivalries and turf wars persisted throughout the late 1940s as specific roles and missions were heatedly debated among the services to justify relative organizational importance and commensurate budgeting imperatives. Unfortunate to the Navy/Marine Corps team was the rough treatment received by the Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

General Bradley's, CJCS, less than prophetic quote, in October 1949, delivered to the House Armed Services Committee, was cleverly engineered to diminish the service utility of the organization he referred to as the "Fancy Dans" -- the U.S. Marine Corps.³ Sarcasm aside, the statement seemed reasonable given the existing international/diplomatic environment at the conclusion of World War II. There was nothing on the threat horizon that supported a Normandy or Pacific island-hopping amphibious scenario. The evolving Cold War strategy fixated on developing nuclear arms capabilities and a static conventional

deterrence on the European continent. Before an operational chronology of the early 1950 Korean campaign is presented, it may prove valuable to contrast the broad global and strategic environment facing today's U.S. policy makers.

POST - 1990

The cracking of the Berlin Wall in December 1989 marked the beginning to the end of the forty year Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. A euphoric question of optimism swept across America. What can we do with the inevitable "peace dividend?" Most were not satisfied to catalog "peace itself" as the "peace dividend." Domestic imperatives demanded a demobilization of some degree because the threat of a global war did not exist, or at least, was significantly diminished. Soviet communism imploded -- American capitalism prevailed.

Demobilization commenced and concern over bipolar nuclear proliferation changed to responsible nuclear de-escalation with concomitant concerns of Third World proliferation. The U.S. National Security Strategy transformed to the management of regional conflicts through crisis response. Conventional deterrence with crisis response to regional conflicts assumed a larger proportion of attention than the older, but still required nuclear deterrence.

During the infancy of this transformation, the Gulf War with Iraq developed and departed with tremendous military but debatable political successes. The U.S. led coalition of thirty-six nations supported President Bush's call for a *New World Order* that could allow for U.S. superpower status in a multi-polar world. Demobilization continues today with a national defense strategy based on the four foundations of *Strategic Deterrence, Forward*

Presence, Crisis Response, and Reconstitution. The National Military Strategy, which supports the National Security Strategy, directs that plans and resources be primarily focused on deterring and fighting regional rather global wars.⁴

The latest proposal from the Clinton administration is to shrink the number of service members to 1.4 million by 1997 from the current 1.8 million active duty force.⁵ If achieved, these reductions will bring active duty forces below the post World War II nadir of 1.5 million realized in 1947.

Comparative strategic transitions are obvious. During both periods, significant reductions in military forces occurred based upon *reactive vice anticipatory interpretation* of global threats. The specter of future threats to national interests are not clearly defined.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE SEA IN 1950

*"...the amphibious landing was tactically the most powerful military device available . . . and that to employ it properly meant to strike deep and hard into enemy-held territory."*¹

Douglas A. MacArthur, Supreme U.N. Commander, August 23, 1950

On Sunday, June 25, 1950, the Republic of Korea was attacked as elements of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) proceeded south across the 38th parallel. Two days later, President Truman authorized the utilization of U.S. air and sea services to give support to embattled South Korean forces. Four days after the invasion commenced, the capital of Seoul was seized by the NKPA on June 29th. An ad-hoc vanguard of the U.S. Eighth Army, *Task Force Smith*, was airlifted from Japan and hastily placed into blocking positions north of Osan. On the morning of July 5th, five years of negligible military readiness was overrun like an insignificant speed-bump by a column of North Korean T-34 tanks.

The NKPA's bold initiative continued to be rewarded for the remainder of July. The now combined United Nations ground forces, under the operational control of Major General Walton Walker, Commander Eighth Army, were bloodily shoved down the peninsula by NKPA forces until the last elements of the Eighth Army found themselves east of the Nakdong river on 31 July, just five weeks after the invasion commenced.

PUSAN PERIMETER

*"there will be no more retreating, withdrawal, readjustment of lines or whatever you call it, . . . We must fight to the end. We must fight as a team. If some of us die, we will die fighting together."*²

General Walton Walker, Commander, Eighth Army

The United States acquired *critical mobilization time* with the defense of the Pusan perimeter. The perimeter enjoyed the natural boundaries of the wide Nakdong river, the Korea Strait as a southern boundary, and the Sea of Japan to the east. The survivors inside the perimeter were not in good shape militarily. Morale and unit cohesion were poor concurrent with manpower shortages. Reinforcements to the Eighth Army, which before hostilities was the Occupation Army of Japan, were steadily trickling in from the United States and other international sources, such as Great Britain.

In June 1950, the U.S. Marine Corps had an active duty component strength of approximately 75,000 troops. The First Marine Division (MARDIV), commanded by Major General Oliver P. Smith, at Camp Pendleton, California, provided the first wave of Marines earmarked for duty in Korea. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, organized on July 7th under the command of Brigadier General Edward Craig (Assistant Division Commander - 1st MARDIV), was a heavily armed advance component of First MARDIV. When they sailed on July 14th, the 5th Marines' three battalions possessed two rifle companies each, instead of the normal three. This was a direct result of post World War II demobilization. Upon arrival at Pusan on 3 August, the First Marine Brigade numbered 4,700 Marines strong.³ Elements of the First Brigade were committed to counter-attack operations within days on the southwest perimeter area in what became known as the Nakdong Bulge.

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray's 5th Marine Regiment voraciously defended the perimeter until 6 September when they were withdrawn for embarkation from Pusan to Inchon and reassignment to 1st MARDIV.

It was during the six week Pusan perimeter defense that U.S. forces needed to rely on joint warfare coordination for their survival. Foremost, the strategic sealift and mobility of Navy ships allowed for troop reinforcements and the critical logistics links connecting the United States to Japan and Korea. Besides U.S. Army and Marine Corps integration on the perimeter, USAF, USN, and USMC tactical aviation assets provided life-saving air support to those ground forces. No other warfighting capability created as much controversy and inter-service rivalry as *close air support* (CAS). Remnants of the CAS argument are still prevalent in the 1990s.

"Supreme Commander General MacArthur had directed that all air support requests from General Walker's beleaguered Eighth Army in the Pusan pocket should be coordinated through Fifth Air Force."⁴ The Fifth Air Force, based and headquartered in Japan with the exception of some P-51 Mustang aircraft forward deployed to Pohang, could not provide responsive and sustained CAS due to the displaced distance. Aircraft carriers deployed all along the Korean peninsula provided greater flexibility to the United Nation forces. The British carrier H.M.S. *Triumph* joined the U.S.S. carriers *Valley Forge*, and *Philippine Sea*, (both elements of Task Force 77), along with the *Sicily*, and the *Badoeng Strait* (Task Group 90.5). Marine Corps squadrons VMF-214 and VMF-323 were assigned to the small escort carriers *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait* respectively.

Command and control, as well as air to ground, communications were initially

strained and somewhat disruptive to effective air support. The implementation of liaison officers at the Air Force's Joint Operations Center (JOC) facilitated smoother service coordination for more timely CAS support to engaged ground forces. Major General Wayland, Far East Air Force's (FEAF) Vice Commander for Operations later wrote to Air Force Chief of Staff, General Vandenberg that:

Korea has provided an ideal area for employment of carrier-based aircraft in tactical operations. The type aircraft used by the Navy and USMC -- fighters and dive bombers -- are well suited to this type work. In the absence of hostile air opposition, they have performed well and have been of great assistance.⁵

Similar accolades from General Walker to General MacArthur voiced praise on the Fifth Air Force's efforts and abilities to make the difference in the Eighth Army's success in defense of the perimeter. The joint efforts of Air Force, Navy, and Marine aviation to interdict NKPA lines of communication and provide crucial CAS support to engaged U.N. forces along the perimeter allowed for the holding of a tenuous foot-hold on the peninsula. General MacArthur in writing about the contribution of the four aircraft carriers stated: "The Navy carriers were a vital factor in holding the Pusan perimeter, especially until our land bases developed effectively to handle the air phase of the campaign."

The time and space factors of the young campaign materialized. With the bulk of NKPA offensive forces grid-locked to the southeast, General MacArthur's bold counter-offensive from the sea began to take form.

INCHON TO SEOUL

"Inchon was a daring and brave conception, brilliantly executed and worthy of study as a precedent of amphibious excellence, in the very unlikely case of its ever being considered again as military strategy."⁶

If General MacArthur were alive today, I expect he would be amused to witness the *frenzy of jointness* within the Department of Defense since implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. A recently released JCS *Doctrinal Statement of Selected Joint Operational Concepts*, dated 23 November 1992, articulates basic foundations and concepts a Joint Force Commander needs to consider when synchronizing operations to support political objectives. Joint Force Commanders must be prepared to employ all available forces in both symmetrical and asymmetrical operations; and to not only attack the enemy's physical capabilities, but also the enemy's morale and will. This multidimensional concept is called *Full Dimensional Operations*.⁷ There was never any doubt within MacArthur's mind, over forty-two years ago, of what needed to be accomplished by his joint/combined forces. By selecting some critical components from the highly complementary documents of the *new* Joint Doctrinal Statement and the Naval Service's *From The Sea* directive we can see why MacArthur achieved success early in the Korean War.

MacArthur's concept, or *commander's vision*, for a flanking maneuver from the sea at Inchon was conceived as early as 29 June when he observed the capture of Seoul from an aerial perspective.⁸ It would be almost another month, and two or three concept of operations proposals later, before the details of *Operation Chromite* were finalized with respect to execution date and force composition. His commander's vision of how the operation would be orchestrated was already established before the National Command

Authority (NCA) could articulate a national strategy for the regional conflict in Korea.

Recognizing the critical linkage of how current operations shape future operations, MacArthur described his hammer and anvil strategy for the Korean peninsula. Once the North Korean enemy was "fixed," he intended "to exploit our air and sea control and by amphibious maneuver strike behind his mass of ground forces."⁹ The Inchon campaign was designed to be the anvil against which the Eighth Army's counter-attack from the south would be the hammer.¹⁰

Two supreme challenges faced the seventy year old Allied Commander -- where would he garner sufficient forces trained in that mission area, and how would he convince the National military leadership (JCS) the high risk amphibious operation could be successfully accomplished and justify the calculated risk.

Task Organization. The Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group (JSPOG) of the Far East Command was tasked to plan and implement the commander's vision. The JSPOG was heavily influenced by U.S. Army staffing from MacArthur's Far East Command, but still possessed adequate joint warfare expertise and representation. The nucleus of the invasion force was built around the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division, which comprised the newly designated X Corps, commanded by Major General Edward M. Almond, USA. The Fifth Air Force, under the operational control of the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) Command, did not directly support the invasion forces; but were tasked to continue direct support of Eighth Army and conduct extensive interdiction operations throughout the peninsula in general support of the invasion. FEAF maintained coordination control for all air operations excluding amphibious objective area AOA air operations.

The absolute essential support for the landing emanated from Naval Joint Task Force Seven, commanded by Admiral Arthur Struble. JTF Seven was tasked to provide air cover, shore bombardment, blockade, minesweeping, and logistics support to the attack force, which was commanded by Admiral Doyle.¹¹ A multi-national armada of 260 vessels, carrying nearly 70,000 men, were to be involved in one stage or another during the invasion.¹²

Planning. Everything associated with Inchon defied amphibious warfare logic. An excessive tidal range, which varied by 32 feet, created tricky five to seven-knot currents in a port possessing a restrictive channel and numerous other obstacles, such as the sea walls surrounding the city and the expansive mudbanks. Nearly all cognizant staff planners classified the proposed operation as too risky and fraught with potential cumulative failures. A showdown meeting on 23 August with the service chiefs, General Collins, USA and Admiral Sherman, USN, could not persuade MacArthur to consider the more benign port of Kunsan.

Inchon was a *forcible entry point* where the joint force could easily target an NKPA *center of gravity*. MacArthur's selection of Inchon as the point of assault was a blend of his strategic, psychological, political, and military reasoning. Strategically -- it was a deep envelopment behind enemy lines, and in his own words, "is and always has been the most decisive maneuver of war." Psychologically -- it would restore the Western World's reputation and garner public support. Politically -- MacArthur felt the landing of Marines would be decisive, forever justifying the status of the Marine Corps. Militarily -- Inchon was not heavily defended, facilitating a rapid drive to Seoul and an interdiction of enemy

supply lines.¹³ MacArthur stated the "NKPA would consider a landing at Inchon impossible and insane, and would be taken by - surprise." Based on forecasted tidal levels, D-day for Operation Chromite was scheduled for 15 September.

Joint Power Projection. The general concept of the invasion called for 1st MARDIV (with 5th and 1st Marine Regiments), as lead element of X Corps, to seize and secure Inchon. After the initial assault, X Corps would secure Kimpo airfield enroute to the ultimate objective of Seoul. Concurrent with the invasion would be a counter-attack northward by the Eighth Army from their defensive positions.

The *synchronized maneuver and interdiction* of combined forces throughout the Korean theater of operations was evident, complementary, and focused on both strategic and operational centers of gravity. Coordinated and intensified interdiction efforts by all services commenced in early September with the targeting of airfields, supply depots, railroad bridges, lines of communication, and the NKPA. This included USAF and USMC aircraft from Japan, and the Navy's Task Force 77 and Task Group 90.5, which now totalled five aircraft carriers. Forty percent of the carrier's efforts concentrated on the Inchon/Seoul area, with the remaining sixty percent conducting interdiction and deception strikes outside the AOA to the areas north of Seoul and Kunsan.¹⁴ Deception efforts concentrated on the coastal areas of Kunsan, Osan, and Wonsan, where the battleship U.S.S. Missouri concentrated its efforts. From the 6th through 10th of September, over 5,000 sorties were flown throughout the peninsula by the U.S. services.¹⁵

Preparation of the landing areas intensified on 10 September when Marine Corsairs from the *USS Sicily and Badoeng Strait* conducted repeated napalm strikes on the island of

Wolmi-do. Wolmi-do was the island fortress overlooking the harbor and all available approaches to the city. It had to be seized for any possible landing in the city to be successful. On the morning of the 13th, naval gunfire (NGF) support supplemented the continuing airstrikes. For two additional days, eight, six, and five-inch NGF support from U.S. and British ships augmented continuous Navy and Marine airstrikes on the island.

From the Sea. Forty-five minutes prior to an L-hour of 0630 hours, the tiny island of Wolmi-do shook from constant NGF support and airstrikes. Nearly 3,000 NGF shells were fired along with three LSMR rocket ships firing 1,000 five-inch rockets each. The orchestrated pre-invasion bombardment proved valuable as 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines met little resistance when landing on Green Beach.

The roar of their engines hit us like a bomb. Those Marine Corsairs came flying through the smoke toward the beach not more than thirty feet over our heads! Hot, empty machine-gun shells fell on us. Talk about close air support. In front of me now I could see the beach. We couldn't have been more than twenty feet away.¹⁶

PFC Fred Davidson, G CO./5th Marines, 0630 15 September 1950

The main invasion of Inchon occurred during the second wave later in the evening when high tide allowed the LSTs to approach Red and Blue Beaches. Another highly synchronized supporting arms plan kept the port city and waterfront under *constant bombardment for three hours* prior to the main landing scheduled for 1730 hours. Task Force 77 maintained a continuous twelve aircraft airborne-on-call cycle to interdict reinforcement routes into the city. Marine and Navy squadrons alternated with NGF support from cruisers, destroyers, and rocket ships (firing 6,000 missiles in twenty minutes)¹⁷ to neutralize much of the port's defenses.

The landings on Red and Blue Beaches, by the 5th and 1st Marine Regiments

respectively, were not traditional textbook amphibious assaults. Some aspects went remarkably smooth considering the landing environment and the fact that some units were not fully trained organizations, nor actively existed, just six weeks earlier. Ingenuity and adaptability of the Marines to create work-arounds to counter the port's unique structure allowed the power projection to continue landward. Although the surprise of the overall invasion, in conjunction with pre-landing bombardment, eliminated any organized NKPA defense, sporadic pockets of resistance made it challenging nonetheless. Despite the periodic and apparent disorganization, a somewhat inherent characteristic of amphibious warfare, the landings were on time and all objectives were seized on schedule. By the end of D-Day, Admiral Doyle's Task Force-90 had put 13,000 Marines ashore with all their weapons, equipment, and supporting heavy equipment.¹⁸

Phasing and Sustainment. The 5th and 1st Marine Regiments linked-up the morning of D+1 and commenced their eastward advance along the Inchon-Seoul highway toward Kimpo airfield. The lead elements of 7th Army Division commenced their ship-to-shore movement into the Inchon *lodgement* to sustain the joint forces. The 7th Division was tasked to advance towards Suwon to cover Colonel Puller's 1st Marines southern flank; and to be prepared for a link-up with elements of the Eighth Army, which also commenced a concurrent counter-attack from the Pusan perimeter the same day.

The *landward reach of littoral operations* was assured when 5th Marines secured Kimpo on the morning of 18 September. First Marine Aircraft Wing's squadrons, units of Marine Aircraft Group 33, arrived from Itami Japan, and began operating from the 6,000 foot airstrip on the 19th and 20th. Additionally, VMF-214 and VMF-323, from the escort

carriers *Sicily and Badoeng Strait* were phased ashore and operated from Kimpo. Surge operations from carrier decks and Kimpo provided direct and responsive CAS support to X Corps forces, greatly enhancing their aggressive push to Seoul. NGF support from cruisers and destroyers augmented Navy/Marine CAS for the inland advance until their maximum effective range was exceeded on D+3.

The 7th Marines reached Japan on 17 September after an ad-hoc roundout from elements of 2nd MARDIV located at Camp Lejeune. MacArthur's repeated pleas back in July for full 1st MARDIV manning with three regiments paid off, as the fresh regiment began unloading at Inchon on 21 September. The force sustainment of X Corps at Inchon was a significant effort and not completed until D+6, at which time Major General Almond assumed command ashore on the evening of 21 September. Admiral Struble officially dissolved JTF Seven and commenced the role of a Naval Support Force for what had now officially become a land campaign.¹⁹ The Navy and Marine Corps successfully provided a bold and decisive *enabling capability from the sea* to MacArthur's combined operation. The continued tactical and logistical support and *sustainment to landward* operations were invaluable to the attainment of the strategic objective.

Although the X Corps did not require FEAF's tactical air support within the AOA, there was a tremendous requirement for air-transported supplies and reinforcements that were delivered by the Combat Cargo Command. The first C-54 transport landed at Kimpo on 19 September. "On 20 September the FEAF Combat Cargo Command began an around-the-clock airlift into Kimpo which immediately bettered the planning figure of 226 tons delivered each day."²⁰ The unloading of sealift cargo at Inchon could not adequately fulfill the

logistics requirements of MAG-33, so a large proportion of aviation gasoline and munitions arrived via airlift. General Almond in recognizing the airlift provided to the Marines at Kimpo stated, "the success of our arms was aided greatly by the tremendous amounts of freight and combat-replacement personnel airlifted during the most critical periods of operations."²¹ Approaching the benefits of successfully synchronizing *full dimensional operations* within the joint AOA, from all available resources, the *follow-through* phase commenced to achieve the strategic objective.

Political and Operational Objectives in Conflict.

Activities at the operational level of war link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to accomplish the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to sustain these events. These activities imply a broader dimension of time and space than do tactics.²²

From 20 September, when the 5th Marines first crossed the Han river, the level of fighting intensified with a commensurate slowing of progress in achieving the strategic objective. As the Marines approached the outskirts of Seoul against fierce Communist opposition, approximately 10,000 fresh, well-armed troops rushed down from the north, entrenched on strong terrain, and prepared for a last-ditch defense.²³

MacArthur was obsessed with gaining control of Seoul by 25 September. His strategic objective for Operation Chromite, without concern for the operational and tactical considerations, had changed to the political desire to reclaim the capital city within three months to the day in which NKPA forces commenced their invasion. Almond was equally determined to achieve the deadline, and in the process undermined the responsible execution of X Corps' operational plan.

Command relationships between Generals Almond and Smith became strained as Almond grew impatient with the lack of Marine progress against the heavily defended western portions of Seoul. 1st Marines and the 32nd Infantry Regiment penetrated the city proper on the 24th and 25th. The remainder of 1st MARDIV advanced into the capital from the north and west and the 7th Division from the south. Extremely premature declarations of victory were released by both Almond and subsequently MacArthur stating that enemy forces were fleeing to the north and that Seoul was securely in Allied hands. The politically accelerated assault left the city in ruins as bitter street fighting ensued for two additional days before the 5th Marines reached the Capital building. Seoul was officially secured on 28 September, one day before MacArthur formally restored the government of Syngman Rhee.

Similar politically driven motivations spurred a haphazard link-up between X Corps and the Eighth Army. *Task Force Lynch*, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James Lynch of 3/7th Cavalry, officially linked-up with 31st Infantry north of Osan, in the same general location in which *Task Force Smith* was overrun on 5 July.

While it is recognized that military action must have political purpose, tactical engagements and operational battles must support theater campaigns which achieve strategic and eventual political objectives. During the last days in the drive on Seoul, the strategic, operational, and tactical objectives merged into one synonymous event. Excessive casualties and collateral damage occurred due to the *political employment* of the combined forces.

Despite the concluding operational mistakes of Operation Chromite, in two weeks time, MacArthur's Allied Command, using synchronized maneuver and interdiction from the sea, completely shattered enemy cohesion and reversed an impending U.S. military disaster.

CHAPTER IV

STEAMING BACK TO THE FUTURE

"The continued development of amphibious warfare by the Navy and Marine Corps will make this powerful tool in modern clothing available to the next American commander who needs another Inchon on short notice to defeat the forces of aggression."

Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble

A helpful contributing factor in the success of Operation Chromite was a cooperative enemy. Overall opposition to the invasion during the early stages was user friendly. One could even call that luck -- I prefer to characterize it as *creating your own luck*. Perhaps it is more indicative of what is produced when you cross-pollinate maritime strategy and maneuver warfare. The *mobility and flexibility* to displace geographically with *speed and surprise*, and forcibly project sustained power against critical enemy vulnerabilities is probably more accurate a description of what happened at Inchon in September 1950. More specifically, the Inchon landing succeeded because of *specialized training, overwhelming and superior firepower, and sufficient amphibious lift*.

Specialized Training. "The landing demonstrates the great power of an assault from the sea. Naval training after World War II, despite great budget difficulties, had prepared naval amphibious forces and Fleet Marine Forces that could produce the precise coordination required for an amphibious assault."² The Naval services in the 1990s, and beyond, will also have tremendous budgeting challenges. A Naval Expeditionary Force in readiness does not evolve from decommissioned ships, squadrons at fifty percent full maintenance capability due to supply shortages, or from Marine infantry regiments significantly below manning

levels. People fight wars with equipment -- both must be fully trained and exercised to respond in a moments notice.

Superior Firepower/Power Projection. The continuous bombardment of Inchon for three hours prior to Red and Blue Beach landings is *power projection from the sea*. A significant portion of the effort was from the naval gunfire platforms. With the battleship fleet decommissioned, again, the Navy's current NGF capability is woefully inadequate. Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAM) is a superior power projection weapon, but a forward observer pinned down on a beach by machine-gun fire cannot call for a high-expense TLAM strike on a reinforced bunker. The largest caliber NGF system in the fleet today is 5-inch. Unlike training deficiencies that can be managed and resolved in the near term, our NGF inadequacies require the best naval minds to develop solutions and keep it from becoming a permanent problem.

The absolute expertise of Marine aviators to conduct effective CAS during the defense of Pusan, the Inchon landing, and subsequent drive to Seoul was crucial to landward power projection/interdiction efforts. During 1950, Navy aviators were equally capable. Today, they are not! It is not a question of aviation skills, but one of training and *personal commitment*. CAS is as much a part of the Marine aviators heritage and ethos as the tailhook is to the Navy aviator. Both aviators are equally capable of performing each other's mission, provided personal commitment is invested. The continued integration of Marine squadrons into carrier air wings should facilitate healthy CAS ethos building.

Much more sensitive for future contingencies is the forward land basing of carrier squadrons, much like VMF-214 and VMF-323 at Kimpo airfield, in order to sustain

landward power projection. The concept is certainly maritime threat dependent, but one joint force planners should never discard; and a capability Composite Warfare Commanders be willing to contribute to a Unified Commander.

A second amphibious landing at Wonsan was preempted in October 1950 due to our inability to clear the minefields. Desert Storm highlighted our continuing ignorance and lack of attention to mine countermeasures (MCM). Mines are to amphibious operations what surface-to-air missiles are to aircraft. They are a cheap and easily acquired weapon capable of significantly hindering operations in the littoral. The Navy has initiated a get-well program by establishing a single command (CoMineWarCom) to oversee the Navy's MCM program, but there still exists a shallow water mine countermeasures deficiency identified until the year 2000.³

Amphibious Lift. Admiral Struble had the honor of commanding 260 Allied vessels during the Inchon landing. The Navy/Marine Corps vision for the future in *From The Sea* will fail unless this major deficiency is rectified. Colonel G.D. Batcheller's USMC(RET) award winning essay succinctly summarizes the problem as follows:

First, available and projected lift is insufficient to support rapid-response amphibious operations of significant size. Second, the dwindling capabilities within, and in support of, the amphibious fleet are no longer sufficient to conduct a forcible entry into a beachhead possessing any credible defenses. Finally, there is no reason to expect that resources will be made available to remedy these deficiencies in the foreseeable future.⁴

Implementation of *From The Sea* guidance and direction will reorient our amphibious priorities, but it will be years before a robust fleet can conduct large scale amphibious operations. It is imperative that we stay the course and not grow impatient during the ensuing lean periods.

CONFLUENCE of DOCTRINE and PURPLE HAZE

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 all but guarantees that future military operations will be joint (purple) in nature. With the continued demobilization trends through the nineties, it is hard to imagine any single service having an autonomous warfare capability that does not require some degree of sister-service support. The joint/combined success of Desert Storm has created a doctrinal renaissance among the services. Joint Pub 0-1, Basic National Defense Doctrine sets forth principles, doctrines, and guidance to govern the joint activities of the armed forces. It is designed, in part, to provide the national position for the development of combined military doctrine.

A key to MacArthur's success in Korea was the ability to synchronize the employment of sea, air, and land forces. The JCS Doctrinal Statement of Selected Joint Operational Concepts refers to this as Full Dimensional Operations. *From The Sea* refers to the sea, air, and land environment as battlespace. It further states that "dominating the battlespace means ensuring effective transition from open ocean to littoral areas, and from sea to land and back, to accomplish the full range of potential missions."⁵

As the Naval Service develops its 21st Century doctrine, it is imperative to utilize the appropriate, and guiding JCS publications. This will minimize the *purple haze* of interpretive confusion that is bound to be created when the confluence of individual service doctrine melds together, particularly within the littoral setting. Trying to integrate battlespace dominance with the Air-Land and Aerospace Control doctrine of the Army and Air Force will be difficult and require meticulous negotiations.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Post World War II inter-service momentum was divergent and non-cooperative in nature, during a period in history when the United States fixated on one threat. What caught policy-makers by surprise was the requirement to respond to a major regional conflict. We were unprepared.

Post Cold War inter-service momentum is generally convergent and cooperative. In the 1990s, we are trying to view and assess many threats, and prepare for a wide variety of regional conflicts with dwindling resources. The political, legislative, and budgetary conflicts on the horizon will create an environment ripe to ferment and promote adoption of 1940s-like parochialism during the impending roles, missions, and functions debate. Despite all our technology and forty-five years of wisdom, one item is constant -- the unknown.

There will never be another Operation Chromite, just like there will never be another Desert Storm. Throughout history, all armed conflicts and participant's reactions have possessed a unique fingerprint. There will always be similarities and close parallels to catalog as lessons learned for future reference. However, the recorded history of mankind's behavioral political interactions is very consistent. There will always be armed conflict between people perceived to have power and influence, and those in pursuit of the same.

The Navy and Marine Corps need each other more today than at any time since October 1949, when General Omar Bradley postulated about the future of amphibious warfare. As a team, they must develop a common defense and purpose in articulating and

implementing their combined vision of *From The Sea*. There will be a tidal wave of analysis, rhetoric, criticism, and disbelief that our doctrine and requested force structure will be required in a peaceful *New World Order*. At which time, the Navy and Marine Corps, as a unified Naval Service can point to the history of 1950, reflect upon the challenges and achievements of Operation Chromite, and laconically and quite crudely state:

-- Trust Us - Been There - Done That!

The 21st century equivalent to Inchon is out there, waiting to happen somewhere. It gets one day closer each day the sun rises and sets. The question is whether we will be prepared to successfully overcome the unique challenges that will be presented to the Naval Service and the nation.

NOTES

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